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1851

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE GRADUATING CLASS

OF

THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON,

AT THEIR REQUEST,

IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL,

FEBRUARY 23d, 1851,

By REV. PROF. J. W. MILES.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

CHARLESTON:
JOHN RUSSELL,
256 King-st.
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TO
THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 1851,
THIS DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS DEDICATED
AS A MEMENTO OF FRIENDSHIP,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

200 2 May 7

DISCOURSE.

"COVET EARNESTLY THE BEST GIFTS."—1st Cor., 12, in v. 31.

This period, gentlemen, when the associations of the past, and the anticipations for the future, are so intimately blended, is naturally one of great importance to you, and of deep interest to us. The relations, but we trust not the ties, which have connected us, are henceforth to be altered. Life opens before you with new reality and importance; and we can not but watch your future career with lively interest and sympathy, in the hope that the bonds of mutual respect and friendship will become strengthened by the hand of Time, which can only touch with decay what is earthly and ignoble. You are about to enter a new sphere of responsibilities and duties, in which every act will leave a deeper impress upon character, and station—upon the immortal soul and the eternal record. At such a time, amidst the attractive topics which might, perhaps, be not inappropriately selected as the theme of present discourse, we cannot hesitate directing our attention to what may seem to be the homely and obvious, but nevertheless, everlasting principles, upon which alone a truly noble eminence can be founded, and which can alone support us unfalteringly in adversity, moderate us in prosperity, guide us in difficulty, nerve us in danger, ennoble us amidst desertion, calumny, and neglect, and elevate us, even amidst the pangs of dissolution, above Earth, and Time, and Death.

It is a wise and beneficent arrangement of Providence, that the stern trials of life, while seen in the distance, are gilded to the eye of youth with the brightness of hope, and crowned with the diadem of honorable success. While we stand upon the threshold of the arena in which we are to mingle in the great

battle of the world, we are not deceived by the illusion that the contest is but pastime, and that the crown is to be won with flower-wreathed weapons; but the natural enthusiasm and ambition of youth, incite us fearlessly to the contest, and nerve us to strike boldly for the crown. The young man who enters that contest with no enthusiasm—no lofty aspirations—no fixed determination to conquer—is palsied in the very instincts which should characterise the bloom of manhood. But when, in the actual and earnest strife, those swelling instincts, which Providence has given us to bear us bravely into the battle, become tried by opposition, reined by judgment, directed by prudence, repressed by disappointment, sneered at by cold calculation, jeered and scorned by shallow utilitarianism, chilled by the soulless egotism of cliques and parties, overwhelmed and crushed by disaster and failure—what shall save the man from hopelessly succumbing to misfortune, recklessness, or despair? At what immortal shrine shall those waning fires of youthful hope, enthusiasm, and ambition, rekindle with undying brilliancy and vigor their glorious flames? At the altar of that Religion, which, placing man in a new relation to the Supreme Father, fills him with the high consciousness that his life is related to futurity, is inwoven with an eternal drama, and possesses a significancy of everlasting import, even if it pass through this brief stage involved in the deepest obscurity and neglect. It is God himself who nourishes the fires of holy hope—of sanctified enthusiasm, in the soul of the christian; and who, in teaching him that every act in the sphere wherein Providence has placed him, has an immortal end—also animates him with the certainty of a reward, beyond all that the most sanguine imagination could paint, or to which the most daring ambition could aspire.

The desire for distinction is natural, and, therefore, when rightly directed, is laudable and honorable. Every moral being, in his assigned sphere, has a special calling to fulfil; and animated by the consciousness that he is thus work-

ing for God, his necessary toil becomes a labor of love. But there is also a false desire for fame, to which we are liable, and which must be here indicated and condemned. We sometimes cheat ourselves with the delusion, that we desire distinction and power in order to benefit our race—that we wish to make our life a grand reality for all coming ages—while we shrink with disgust from the slow, weary, often obscure toil, by which alone true renown can be won. We turn impatiently from the labor which must be silently and wearilessly pursued, unknown to the world, cheered and sustained only by faith in God, in the work, and in the future; and we cannot consent to the long entombment in the chrysalis, with its unseen, solitary toils, for the sake of the glorious out-bursting of the future psyche. Or we may, perhaps, imagine that it is not the toil, the present obscurity, from which we shrink; but the uncertainty of the issue: that we may lose every opportunity for fame, by consuming life upon an object which will prove incapable of conferring renown; and that life is too brief to admit of many experiments, or the rectification of many errors in the selection of an object. We may thus fluctuate in doubt between countless plans, which may at once give us fame; and we make the mistake of supposing, that if we could, by some brilliant and rapidly executed effort, satisfy our craving for distinction, we would then be better empowered to benefit mankind, and would possess a new stimulus to steady and laborious toil. Fame is not the instrument of usefulness until it has been won as the guerdon of earnest work. But we may be longing for a fame which is fleeting breath, and for which we would make all effort merely the means of attainment. There is, however, a greater word than fame. Pursue Duty with conscientious earnestness; and even without aiming at renown, it will be the sure result of worthy performance.

The soul, which has a special work to perform, must pursue its calling by the resistless impulse—the necessities of its own desires and cravings. It must, it will, utter itself; and the more

emphatically, from the opposition and barriers through which it is compelled to make itself a way. It speaks, it acts, because it must; and fame it leaves to come or not, as the future shall reveal. If its work and calling be great, it has an instinct that renown must be its free reward. The reward seen glittering in the distance may cheer and elevate; but its work, its calling, its mission, is that which absorbs the energies of the earnest soul, and is that for which it labors. It labors not for fame as an end, because fame must be the necessary consequence of the great work, whose achievement is the true end of its toil, its enthusiasm, and its devotion.

If the soul feels that it must labor only for fame—that it has powers to achieve it—and that fame is the end, and object, and goal of its toil—that object it may attain; but it will accomplish no great work which Humanity will revere and cherish as a glory and benefit to the race. The fame thus obtained will be only an homage to the powers of the individual man. But when the individual is identified with the great work which is to be an eternal glory and benefit to Humanity, in that work will he find the satisfaction of his soul and its aspirations; and immortal fame and renown will be accorded him by his race, whether he has consciously labored for them or not—a fame and renown which the race will jealously cherish as a part of its own glory.

But there is another mistake which we may commit. We may confound immortality with the fame which we covet. We may not believe that one's name can live, except in the renown accorded by posterity. We may make, therefore, no account of the quiet, unobtrusive path of daily duty; and those who are obscurely pursuing that path, and doing nothing to leave a name known to, and admired by the world, we may regard as scarcely worthy the name of living. If we so think, we forget that thousands may live unknown, die forgotten, leave no visible trace of their silent existence, and yet, in faithfully performing the humble duties of daily life, lay up for

and how different will be our estimate of what often presents such dazzling attractions to the buoyant enthusiasm of youth. We see men who have been ennobled by genius and high qualifications, exalting themselves above their fellow men, and winning a distinction, the admiration of which almost makes us apologists for their faults. We see, for instance, the humble and poor soldier, actuated by what he doubtless considered real patriotism, serving his country without a dream of the boundless ambition which slumbered in his breast; unconscious of the gigantic powers which were not yet roused into action. We see him, step by step, towering upward—plan after plan becoming developed—energy after energy awakened, put forth, increasing. We see him snatch opportunities which others did not perceive—direct minds which unconsciously owned his intellectual superiority—deflect even the interests of country to subserve individual designs—and at length, we begin to lose sight of the means by which he has wrought, in our admiration of the humble soldier, elevated to the headship of a great nation. We see vast schemes open upon his mind, which are forthwith matured with intuitive quickness, and executed with irresistible promptitude. We see the inexhaustible resources of his genius poured out to make yet loftier steps of ascent; his own people—princes—kings—mighty prelates, bowing like menials to the furtherance of his stupendous designs; and we become almost enraptured with a character so elevated and brilliant. But what has been the object of all this scheming and enterprise? The benefit of mankind? The good of his country? The glory of God? Ask the thousand souls hurled into eternity from amidst the din and blasphemy of his battlefields. Ask the cruelly deserted wife, whose fidelity and love were bartered for hollow alliance with faithless and hostile princes. Ask deceived Poland, and the groaning commerce of ravaged Europe. While, with the genius of Cæsar and the unprincipledness of Alcibiades, he worshipped self, and sacrificed the world at that miserable shrine; his crown was already

a circlet of ashes—his sceptre a thing of dust. Without presuming, even in imagination, to look beyond his earthly career, is there any one, who, putting faith in the Savior of mankind, would risk the awful eminence of that soldier's renown in earthly annals, while the solemn warning is ringing in his ears: "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Again, we see the accomplished student, gifted with a versatility of talent which seems almost to place universal knowledge within his grasp. We see him possessed of a vivacity of genius which never tired; a wit ever brilliant—a power of sarcasm scathing and merciless. We see him rapidly soar aloft like the eagle upon the wings of fame; his society courted by the great ones of the earth—his voluminous productions spreading far and wide his celebrated name; and at length he is regarded as an oracle by circles of no mean attainment in literature. We see the influence of his opinion felt throughout a continent; and we can scarce do aught else than admire his extraordinary powers and transcendent abilities. We may see, perhaps, many an aspirant after literary distinction, panting to attain the eminence upon which this man has placed himself. Poetry, history, criticism, philosophy—he touches all with a familiar and masterly hand. But we are compelled to ask if these powers were sanctified, and embalmed in the faith which will render them immortal? And the ghastly spectre of scepticism mocks our query, as it claims their devotion to itself. Throughout the pages of his splendid creations—from amidst the gorgeous wreaths and rich flowers of his poetry—from between the attractive texture of his historical narratives—from among the stately pillars of his philosophical structures—there protrudes the mocking grin of a death's head of scepticism. There is a just scepticism, it is true, but it stands at the portal of real and profound knowledge. He who has never anxiously and truly doubted, has, perhaps, seldom reached that secure and sunny height, where Reason and Faith are blended in in-

dissoluble conviction. But there is also a scepticism, which is the dark and dimming exhalation from our moral nature, rendered turbid by sin. It arises from the unwilling heart, and, creeping upwards, it obscures the intellect; until, in seeking grounds for its justification, the perverted understanding mistakes it for its own creation. It casts its baleful shadow over the dearest hopes of man, and blinding him to his truest wisdom and his securest happiness, it drives him to sever the sacred tie between heaven and earth, and to imagine that his reason is overpowered by difficulties and arguments, which would at once vanish like mist, if only the heart was willing to know its wants, and to open its chambers to the purifying influence of Divine Love. Turn from the noon-day triumph of that genius we have been contemplating, to its lurid sunset, when it is sinking into Eternity. How terrible—how pathetic, is the contrast! The scornful Titan, who in the pride of power, sought to sweep away the life and actions of the Savior of mankind from the records of history, as though His Religion, moved by an Omnipotent Providence, would not still be enshrined in the hearts of men, even were every trace of its early history obliterated; now chained by Remorse, tremblingly asks for an argument—not against Christianity—not even against a hell—but gazing from the brink of Eternity, he asks for some argument against the perpetuity of torment—he drives from him his attendants in horror at his phrensied anguish. Shall we say that this is the effect of disease—the distempered imagination of a weakened mind? We will not dare attempt to lift the veil from the dealings of Jehovah with the souls whom he summons to his mercy or wrath. But leaving the man to the wisdom of his Creator, we may ask if any could covet his fame, who believe the pregnant declaration: “verily, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

We see again, one skilful, and wise, and subtle, amidst every political storm and every change of dynasty, riding aloft in confidence and power. Consecrated once unto the service of

God, appointed to rule in the vineyard of the Lord, yet abandoning his sacred functions, and, with consummate ability, making himself a name among the intriguers, and statesmen, and diplomatists of earth, shall we envy his proud eminence, of sitting, amidst every change, at the head of the council-board of kings? Death must be met. When his hair had grown gray in apostasy, and his strength had failed in the service of fluctuating politics, all that his doubtful soul could catch at—a fleeting shadow, to wrap about it—as it was driven forth naked into eternity, was the touch of the consecrated oil, and the dying participation of the sacred bread. Would we take his talents, his dexterity, his distinction, combined with the terrible doubt overhanging broken vows—an unholy life—a death-bed acquiescence in the rites of religion? There is a solemn voice which restrains us; it tells us, “no man can serve two masters;” it bids us ask our souls, “what shall the end be of them who obey not the Gospel of God?”

We see the gifted poet, at an early age, winning for himself a magnificent fame by the splendor of his muse, and adding to it the reputation of a generous disinterestedness, by casting in his fortunes with those of struggling patriotism. We see him, by the power of his genius, ever drawing new strains from the oft-struck lyre; and by a dash of his hand, as it were, consigning to temporary obscurity in the public estimation, writers of talent and real genius. We see him encircle himself with such dazzling coruscations, that we almost forget in admiration of the Poet to contemplate the character of the man. The eagle soarings of that harp can not claim to be consecrated, because it has also sweetly murmured some feeble melodies about the sacred people. Its noblest notes are struck to the wild breathings of morbid passion; or its most enchanting melodies are poured in attractive grace around vice; or its bewitching strains are prostituted to ribaldry, immorality, and impiety. And when his personal influence died, his literary bans were dissolved, and he was about to go and give account

of his talents, and exchange his earthly fame for the impartial and enduring doom of eternity, charity might weep, and even envy tremble, at the thought, that the genius who had placed in the mouth of Lucifer the awful truth, "he who bows not to God, hath bowed to me," should die, "and give no sign." True, it is said, that upon the dying bed he permitted the prayers of the Church to be read to him at times. We measure not the boundless compassion of God, who is as just in retribution, as he is merciful in the gifts and opportunities which he bestows upon the children of probation. But who that believed the Savior's truth, would choose a fame, won at the cost of conflict with the Savior's words, "not every one shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

We see the laborious scholar, at an early age, challenging distinction for the extent of his information, and the accuracy of his historic composition. We see him devoting years of unwearied application to the construction of a monument of genius, which will identify the endurance of his name with the memory of the great and wonderful Empire, whose varied fortunes he has so magnificently and graphically delineated. We also behold him as he has pictured forth himself from the heart, which the eye of man could not otherwise have scanned. And we find him bandying from theory to theory in Theology, anchored upon no sure rock of safety, "blown about by every wind and wave of doctrine," until he is stranded, and wrecked, and engulfed, in the shifting and smothering quick-sands of infidelity. His own hand presents him but as a finished statue of selfishness. Beneath all the adornment of learning, fame, and cultivation, there is the iciness of spiritual death. And God, in his providence, has ordained, that the very monument of his earthly fame should be disfigured and distorted in its symmetry, by his own hand recording thereupon the deforming scepticism, whose unworthy sneers deface the nobleness of his stately creation. It is doubtful whether he ever more than half disbelieved;

but literary greatness can not clothe the soul with the garments of salvation, or afford consolation in the world of eternal realities. We shrink from a fame coupled with the rejection of Him who has solemnly declared, "he who is not with me, is against me."

But time compels us to turn from the records of History, and to address ourselves to the duties of the present. Those examples have been selected, not because they are the worst of their respective classes, but because they are among the most illustrious. The full and willing tribute which we can pay to the great achievements of their genius, should render more unsuspected and emphatic, the condemnation which we must pronounce upon the erroneous employment of their gifts. If their brilliant renown, destitute as it is of all that can illumine and comfort the most momentous hour of existence, presents nothing which a rational believer in Christianity can envy or covet; surely, we should aim at no distinction which is not founded upon the righteous discharge of duty, and gilded by the sacred light of a clear conscience towards God and man. The earnest aspiration for honorable fame may be a characteristic of the greatest and noblest souls; the impatient craving for present notoriety is too often a mark of narrow and selfish minds. The truest path to worthy distinction, is a conscientious discharge of the duties which lie immediately before us. We are often unable to foresee the remote consequences of present action, but Providence never, perhaps, leaves us ignorant of the duty of the moment; and if that be faithfully performed, we need entertain no anxiety respecting ulterior results, for as we step onward in the path of duty, the way will open before us, and we will derive strength, confidence and light, from every successive advance. The young man possesses at least one eminent advantage towards the acquisition of clear views, before he becomes deeply implicated in prominent action. Modesty is his prerogative, which, while it protects him often from the serious weight of responsibility resting

upon those whose position is to lead and form opinion, it affords him the invaluable right of an honorable suspense and delay, in gathering information, in extending observation, and in deliberately weighing the position to which he must commit himself; while, at the same time, it involves no pusillanimous shrinking from the firmest support of what is just and right. But the young man possesses this advantage, that what might sometimes seem vacillation or weakness in the man of maturity, years, and influence, may be justly attributed to modesty in the youth, who shows an earnest desire to discover the truth, and a firm determination to pursue it. Indeed, modesty, while peculiarly becoming to youth, can never cease being a beautiful ornament of every age, when it is worn in its true character as an accompanying grace to firmness, and is not confounded with its spurious counterfeit—a morbid timidity and indecision. This latter may be united with the most consummate vanity, and inordinate, while unfounded, craving for notoriety and fame; but the former almost invariably accompanies a large intellect, a sound judgment, a genuine courage, and a high determination worthily to win the most honorable, and the greatest attainable, distinction.

Among the various temptations and trials which beset the path of life, there is one which almost every sensitive and progressive mind will be called to encounter. The sneering charge of inconsistency will often try the moral courage, and tempt to a sluggish acquiescence in error and indifference. There is only one species of inconsistency which justly brings reproach; it is, to know an error, and yet to persist in it; to claim to be a reasonable being, and yet to be indifferent to the discovery of truth; to recognize sound principle in theory, and to contradict it in practice. But it must ever be noble to acknowledge our ignorance and errors, and to endeavor to correct them. It is a feeble mind which never makes progress, and it is a sort of reproach to Providence, in view of the opportunities afforded us for experience and information, to boast that we have ever

remained stationary, and have never stepped beyond the circle of our youthful range of vision. It is true, that enlarged information and more extended views, do not necessarily imply a change of position or principles. There are some principles which are unchangeable, and which we cannot hold too early, too late, or too firmly. But the charge of inconsistency is too generally brought against some change of opinion or policy, which clashes with party and prejudice. It is next to impossible, that even the most comprehensive mind, with the comparatively limited information with which we commence our career, should not, in the course of events, see cause for a modification, and even sometimes a radical change, of opinion and view. It is as weak to be influenced by every novelty, as it is manful to avow frankly a change of opinion upon reasonable grounds. To be consistent in the pursuit of truth, of right, of what is best for the highest interests of our country and mankind, is the most honorable consistency, although to maintain it may cost the surrender to reason, to duty, and to enlightened conscience, of the most cherished theories and the dearest ties.

The differences of opinion, and the laws of sympathy, which are incident to humanity, must always give rise to party combinations. They are, doubtless, wisely ordained by Providence for the development and preservation of Truth and Liberty, which seem destined to advance and maintain their position, by contrast, trial, opposition, and energetic action. Apathy and stagnation tend to falsehood and slavery. Yet the very nature of party has ever a tendency to partial and one-sided views; and the man who strives to stand above its narrow trammels, is always liable to be misunderstood by the mass, and to be reproached as inconsistent, or as indifferent to principles. But there is the widest difference between adopting one's principles from a party; and first settling those eternal principles which must be the touch-stone of all policy, and then acting with a party so far as it is a supporter of those principles, and presents the most practicable means of honestly work-

ing them out. Men will often, rather obstinately shut their eyes to the plainest facts and the most cogent reasoning, than encounter the startling shock of admitting the possibility of some system or theory becoming untenable, which they have been accustomed to identify with absolute truth. Not habituated to rest back upon broad and ultimate principles, which are immovable amidst every change, and are the basis of truth wherever it may be found, they are cast into hopeless perplexity, and seem to be cut loose from every solid standing-place, as soon as their theory is demolished, beyond which they have never learned to look for certainty or truth. It thus frequently happens, that the most decided party-men indignantly repel the epithet of partisan, because they can conceive of no broader basis of truth than the principles which characterize their peculiar school, and are unable to distinguish between what is really permanent, and what, as merely matter of opinion, may be changed or abandoned without detriment to the essential and everlasting truth itself. The wisest are liable to confound the accidental with the essential; and there is, certainly, sometimes danger, that in yielding the former, we loosen also our hold upon the latter. But the danger is individual and personal; the truth itself can never fail or be destroyed. Nor should we lose sight of the opposite danger, that in obstinately confounding the accidental with the essential, we obscure the cause and progress of Truth, and expose it to needless attack and opposition. There have been innumerable instances of great abilities and logical powers, united with narrow and illiberal views, because there is a kind of wrong-headed conservatism common to man, which suspiciously regards every thing beyond the established and habitual range of thought and dogmas, as a latitudinarian and dangerous innovation; and which will rather fondly cling to familiar errors, than manfully make a just concession, or meet a necessity for large and discriminating reform. It thus endangers what is really worth preserving, by holding on to the rubbish-like accretions that

have grown about it, with an indiscriminating tenacity which provokes the most destructive and radical opposition. No one set of dogmas—no one sect—no one party—can any more be in possession of the whole truth, than any single region can comprise every variety of clime and product. Truth belongs not to this man, this school, or this age; but it is the property of Humanity. Like the universal canopy of Heaven, while it affords to each region a view of some particular constellations; it opens widest its vast and harmonious glories, to the eye which elevated above the mists and obstructions of passion, controversy, and party, extends with largest sweep its horizon of vision. It is better to stand independently the hostile mark, if needs be, of all parties, than to be the slave of any narrow school. Time will assuredly bring the justification of truth and right; and we may, therefore, well endure the present suspicion, misunderstanding, and obloquy, which will as certainly fade away as the narrow-minded and party controversies from which they sprung. Those controversies may even last for centuries, and enthral the general mind as matters of vital import. The progress of enlarged and independent views of Truth is always slow, but its victory is the surer from the very strife through which it must battle every step of its way, and, sooner or later, the smoke of the contest rolls away, and the true position of the combatants is revealed and recognized. It is, however, almost superfluous to remind you, that there have been illustrious examples of the most ardent devotion to truth and patriotism, unfettered by the narrowness of sects and untrammelled by the prejudices of party.

It is a common truism, that in nothing is excellency to be attained without labor and application. Even the rare prerogative of genius can not disdain the auxiliaries of learning and systematic toil. Indeed, the greatest geniuses have generally been the most laborious workmen. And perhaps few errors have caused such apparently inexplicable disappointments, as the gross mistake that brilliant talents and unregulated efforts

can supply the deficiency of matured information and steady application. The world will go onwards; and the man who expects merely by shining parts, without conscientious and progressive cultivation of his talents, to maintain his position, will find his slender resources soon exhausted; and although he may glitter brilliantly for a time, he will rapidly be left behind by his advancing age, until he glimmers faintly in the distance, and is at last lost in the obscurity of uselessness and oblivion. There are, doubtless, honorable spheres of activity and usefulness, in which neither high ability nor extensive information are demanded, and to which, these remarks can only apply in a very modified manner. Yet, the general necessity and duty of intellectual progress is clear; and, certainly, the professional man who is not a constant and earnest learner, is an anomaly, and a contradiction to his position.

But if the error of reliance upon talents alone has produced disappointment, the opposite mistake of affecting universal knowledge, has been a fruitful cause of failure. Some few miracles of genius, have, indeed, seemed almost to compass the vast circle of the learning of their day. But it is a circle which is ever widening; and had we the combined stores of Leibnitz and Sir William Jones, we would still stand only at the threshold of the boundless field, which seems to be ever enlarging its domain with accelerated rapidity. The man who pretends to know everything, will very likely be found ignorant of what, from his position, he ought to know best; and he will probably be even a greater sciolist than he, who, despising the acquisition of knowledge from every source which can afford it, confines his limited draughts to a few favorite springs. The elaborate and thorough pursuit of any one department of knowledge, will naturally lead investigation into the greatest variety of collateral and illustrative departments, and will thus not only open a field which a life-time can not exhaust, but will also give unity and consistency to the most varied acquisitions. But it can not be necessary to do more than remind you, that the

mere accumulation of learning, which makes one only a kind of walking library, is of comparatively little value, unless it contributes to habits of enlarged, independent, and accurate thought, of discriminating judgment, and of a just application and employment of acquired stores. Education is never completed. It begins with the first gleam of consciousness, and continues with the unfolding and exercise of the immortal faculties, into that eternity where ever new volumes of the exhaustless works, and wisdom, and dealings of God, will ceaselessly display their boundless treasures to the wondering soul. What we call education, in a more limited and technical sense, has not for its object the imparting of facts and information in their ordinary acceptation, except as they incidentally subserve and contribute to the higher object of educating the full faculties of the intellectual and moral being, and giving them, as far as possible, their truest direction and their best efficiency. If we regard it practically, as embracing everything which will make the best citizen and the best man, it is evident that no seminary of learning, whatever its advantages, can supply that culture which must depend upon the moral sense and conscientious labor of the individual, or can do more than introduce him to the path of duty and the work of life. At that threshold, gentlemen, we are about to bid you farewell. And if, in addition to the habits of intellectual exercise, the sources of information, and the principles which we have endeavored to impart, we have likewise been so fortunate as to aid in inspiring you with a high conception of duty, a lofty aim for usefulness, and a firm determination to fulfil manfully, in conscientious reliance upon God, the responsibilities of life; we shall feel that our connection has not been in vain; we shall proudly remember the ties which have united us; we shall indulge the hope, that you will cherish a pleasing and grateful recollection of the hours not uselessly spent in our academic pursuits; and we shall be among the first to hail, with cordial sympathy, every honorable distinction which crowns the toils and virtues of your course.

While, as men of education, it will be your privilege and duty to pursue every species of intellectual cultivation, which circumstances will permit or profession may demand, suffer me, with serious and affectionate earnestness, to exhort you, not to neglect the surest source of tranquil satisfaction in prosperity, and of priceless consolation in adversity and sorrow. How many sad mistakes—how many bitter hours, would have been saved to many a youth, had he early learned to draw wisdom and consolation from the exhaustless fountains, of the Sacred Scriptures, of the sustaining and comforting grace of the Holy Spirit, and of the mighty, yet gentle, influences of the Savior's love. Perhaps already some sorrow hath touched your hearts, which is even yet green in your household memories. If I may dare, with reverent step, to tread the verge of such sacred precincts, I would exhort you, by every tender and solemn remembrance, to turn to that Compassionate One, who only wounds to draw us to himself, whose mercies never fail, and whose gracious promises are ever fulfilled to the contrite and faithful. May the power of His Religion guide, sustain, and comfort you through life. May its sacred principles direct your aims, illustrate your characters, elevate your performance of duty, and ennoble the last hours of your earthly career. Let your firmness in the cause of Truth and Duty, while based like adamant upon broad and carefully ascertained principles, be tempered with that christian charity, which can courteously tolerate a difference of opinion, and magnanimously scorn to depreciate an opponent. Leave to the narrow-minded partisan the petty disputes about mint, and anise, and cummin, knowing that the controversies of the day, in the next age often possess the sole interest of wonder, at a contest earnestly waged about insignificant trifles; and that in the really great controversies for everlasting Truth and universal Principles, the triumph must and can only be upon one side and in one cause. Except the great and comprehensive problems which affect man's intellectual, religious, and civil freedom, his social and political rights

and progress, and the truth and advance of Christianity, there is hardly a controversy which is worth engaging seriously the energies of an enlarged and liberal mind, and which can do more than arouse an interest for the present, and finally sink into destined obscurity. Be cheered by the conviction that no earnest word of truth is ever uttered wholly in vain, and that no earnest life of duty is ever entirely lost and fruitless. Remembering the final tribunal, to which the subject of injustice can always confidently appeal—before which we all must inevitably stand—press onward, in the strength of God, to the worthiest performance and the noblest crown. Let no glowing dreams of imagination turn you from the path of usefulness; let no cold utilitarianism chill the generous glow of worthy enthusiasm; let no worldly considerations deflect you from the honorable and immortal aim of enlightened christians.

Gentlemen, my task is done. I should feel greater anxiety respecting the inadequate manner in which it has been performed, had I not confidence in your own determination for the future, and did I not know that the last counsels which you will receive from your Alma Mater, will be delivered from lips far more able to counsel than mine, and to whose honored and admirable advice, will be added the weight of a longer and more familiar intercourse with you than I have enjoyed. I thank you for the opportunity which you have kindly afforded me of addressing you—I thank you for the recollections which you have enabled me to associate with our past relations—and I fervently pray that the God of all grace may guide and protect you through life—may crown your efforts with success and honorable distinction—may support and console you in all trials and difficulties—may make you useful in your generation, and sanctify you in body, soul, and spirit, that He may receive you at the last blameless into His eternal kingdom.

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